

POSITIVE THINKING



1 hour

Create a safe and positive learning environment
by agreeing ground rules for the lesson.

In this lesson we will learn:

- how to be able to reframe a thought to improve how we feel about a situation
- to consider that everyone is different
- how thoughts affect how we feel
- how positive self-talk can help us cope with difficult situations.

Resources

- thought cards
- feeling cards
- slides – changing thoughts
- slide of ‘Sam’
- a ball
- situation cards
- strength cards
- skill cards.

Activity

1. Spread a variety of feeling cards around the room, hand out a thought cards to students and ask them to think about how that thought might make someone feel. Go to that feeling card, see what other thought cards have been matched with that feeling, see if you all agree that these thoughts may result in similar feelings.
2. Now swap thought cards around and repeat. Did the same thoughts match up? Ask students in each group to think of a different way of thinking about the problem that would result in a different feeling. Show an example slide. Instead of thinking, ‘I’ll never get this homework done in time’ = **frustrated**, think ‘I can do an hour tonight, then ask for help tomorrow’ = **relieved**.
3. Have a look at an outline of ‘Sam’ and ask the class to give him or her a stressful situation. Write this down. Ask students to think about what negative thoughts Sam could be having. Record these as a class and discuss the feelings that these thoughts will generate. Ask students in groups to come up with alternative positive thoughts that will help Sam feel able to face the challenge/situation. Share these and write them down.
4. Key message: if negative thoughts come easily to us we need to be aware of them and be able to counteract them with a more balanced view. Self-talk is what you say to yourself in your head. You can send yourself negative and positive messages. Sending yourself only negative messages gives yourself a tough time. People training to be their best (like sports people) deliberately make up and listen to positive self-talk messages. This helps them cope and perform better when they face a challenge.

Examples:

Girl getting dressed for a party

Positive thoughts: I’ll have fun, I look fine, my friends like me the way I am.
Negative thoughts: I’m too fat, I won’t know what to say, and I won’t fit in.



DEAL

Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening



SAMARITANS



Boy having a problem with school work

Positive thoughts: I'll get this right with a bit more time, I can catch up, and I can get help.
Negative thoughts: I'm dumb, people will laugh at me, I'll just get told off for being behind.

5. Hand out situation cards to pairs. Ask students to think about the negative thoughts a person could have when faced with the situation. After they have listed some ideas, think of how they can change their thinking to help them to face the situation and deal with it positively.
6. Ask students to take a few minutes to reflect, on their own, on the negative thoughts that they have. We often focus on the negative and ignore the positive, or guess what's going to happen when we don't know. Ask students to think about how they can rephrase or challenge the negative thoughts that they have and consider how this would improve how they feel.
If appropriate, and the students are comfortable with it, you can discuss some of these in pairs.
7. Spread out strength and skill cards around the room and ask every student to select one that they know that they have. Encourage students to help those that are struggling to find one for themselves.
8. Throw a ball to a student and ask the person who catches to feed back how the skill or strength they have chosen can help with coping with life's challenges. Why it is important? Celebrate all the good ideas and skills the students have. Ask the class to be aware of negative self-talk they have over the next week, to write it down and to practise a few positive phrases, saying them out loud to themselves and noticing how this makes them feel.

Reflection

What can I say to myself to help me feel more positive?

Does anyone make me feel a certain way or is it my own reaction?

Links to: What is emotional health? | Finding a way forward | Barriers to seeking help | Supporting my friends | Building resilience

Make sure young people know what support is available and how to access this support.

DEAL

Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening



SAMARITANS